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FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 9496
INFO RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 4633
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 0896
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6910
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 5724
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 6543
RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN 8532
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 2045
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 1075
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 0725
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2011
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 1069
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 1820
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

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TEL AVIV FOR AMB, DCM, AND ECON
USTR FOR CKLEIN, AVENKATARAMAN, SFRANCESKI, MMOWREY

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TAGS: ETRD WTRO ECON PREL KWBG IS
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON PA BID FOR WTO OBSERVER STATUS

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¶1. (SBU) PA Ambassador Khraishi called on General Council (GC) Chair Matus yesterday to present their formal request for observer status in the GC. Charge was told by someone who was at the meeting that Matus responded that it is too late at this time for the matter to be placed on the agenda for the October GC meeting but that he would circulate the request and consult with Members. Khraishi was low key in his response, making clear that he does not intend to try and make this a big political issue at this point. He then asked what would be necessary to secure observership at the upcoming Ministerial Conference. Matus explained that the PA would need to submit a request.

¶2. (SBU) We have been told that Matus plans to call a meeting on Thursday of the 16 WTO Members, including Israel, that he has consulted with so far. His intention is to try and calm the waters before the October GC. At Thursday's meeting the plan is to advise the parties concerned that he has just received the formal request, he does not plan to place it on the agenda for the October GC, but he intends to consult on the request with Members. We understand that Matus is still concerned about Egypt wanting to make a political issue at the GC. Interestingly, we understand that he has also spoken to the Tunisian Ambassador, who is current coordinator of the Arab Group of WTO Members, and has found him to be more moderate on this issue.

¶3. (SBU) The PA's interest in requesting observership at the MC is a new development. When they originally called on Matus some weeks ago they said they were not going to make such a request since they would automatically obtain observership at the MC by being granted observership in the GC. They described asking for observership at the MC alone as second class status. At this point the only things standing in the way of the PA's observership at the MC is the need for them to make the request, which we believe is in the works, and Israel's objection. Action on the request would require a GC decision. Such a decision would not be placed on the agenda for the October GC unless the PA gets its request in quickly and Israel lifts its objection before Thursday night when the agenda closes. However, there will be another GC meeting in mid-November where this issue could be taken up if it were ripe at that point.